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Allegiances

SunCats Pack

Leader: Sun

Second: Rabbit

Soldiers:

Mouse, Teacher to Snow

Grass

Mist

Tiger

Others not listed

RedCats Pack

Leader: Red

Second: Golden

Soldiers:

Shine, Teacher to Pebble

Others not listed

TreeCats Pack

Leader: Tree

Second: Fern

Soldiers:

Bracken, Teacher to Oak

Others not listed

Prologue

Prologue

The sun warmed the cats' pelts as they followed a golden and white she-cat, who was their leader, Sun. Sun paused and sniffed the air. "Red!" she hissed. "Only my cats hunt in the forest!"

A dark tom, with a reddish-orange pelt, stalked out from behind the ferns. "Not anymore!" he snorted. "Your cats aren't strong enough to stop us!"

A black she-cat stalked out from behind the bushes. "Stop it, you two!" Free hissed, her cats close behind her. "We all know that the moor and this part of the Forest belongs to my cats!"

Hissing, Red leaped at Free. Free sidestepped and raked her claws down his side. Scarlet blood oozed slowly from the wound. Soon, every cat was engaged in battle. Sun's golden pelt flashed in the sunlight, tinted red by blood.

Bodies littered the ground. A yowl of despair rose up from a black tom. "Free!" he cried.

The battle stopped. Free lay on the ground, gasping for breath. Blood gushed from a deep wound on her neck. "Battle… stop," she croaked, but blood leaked out of her mouth as she spoke and she coughed loudly.

"No!" the black tom cried.

Free's eyes had a distant look in them, as if she could she something that no other cat could. Then, her blue eyes closed as Free drew her last breath.

Her cats stood with their heads bowed in grief. Suddenly, a young ginger she-cat gasped. "Look!" she exclaimed.

A ghostly image of Free rose from the fallen leader's body.

The black she-cat's gaze swept over the cats. "Enough blood has been shed!" she hissed.

More spirits rose from the bodies of the other fallen cats. They stepped forward to stand behind Free. "Every cat must follow the soldier law!" Free shouted.

Questioning murmurs came from the cats. "Soldier law? What is that?" Red hissed.

"You must share the prey you catch," an auburn tom said.

"You must take care of older cats," a gray she-cat meowed.

"And, most importantly, you must set borders and respect them," Free finished.

"Why should we do that?" Red hissed.

Sun nodded her head in agreement. Free snorted and the ground shook as she spoke. "You must, or you will all die!" she exclaimed.

"Tree!" Free called. A brown tom stepped forward. "You will be the new leader of my Pack."

"Pack?" Sun asked.

"You will form three packs of cats. TreeCats Pack will have this forest. SunCats Pack will have the marshy ground over to the right, and the moorland over there. RedCats Pack will have that stretch of land over there which includes the river," Free said.

Free and the other dead cats faded, and the three Packs set off to their new territory.

Chapter 1: Snow

SNOW

A rabbit sat in front of Snow, unaware of the white she-cat's approach. Snow darted forward, claws unsheathed, and the rabbit raced away. Snow ran across the moor, following the rabbit's path. She noticed it was heading towards a small tunnel in the ground, big enough for the rabbit to squeeze through but too small for Snow to follow it. Snow leaped and crashed on the ground, missing the rabbit by a fox-length. "Mouse dung!" she hissed as the rabbit faded into the tunnel.

"Come on, Snow!" her teacher, Mouse, meowed disapprovingly. "A kit could have done better than that! At this rate, you will never be a soldier!"

Snow sighed. She didn't want to be a soldier. It was so boring, hunting and patrolling the borders all day. And what did other cats think was so fun about fighting? Snow didn't want to spill blood, she just wanted peace. Why was she so different from every other cat?

"Did you hear me, Snow?" Mouse's voice was saying in her ear.

"Huh? What?" Snow asked.

Mouse sighed unhappily. "Mouse-brain," he muttered under his breath. "I said you can come with me and Tiger to patrol the RedCats Pack border."

"I don't want to," she mumbled.

"That was an order!" Mouse called as she darted away.

Snow kept running, away from the camp and away from Mouse. She stopped as she reached the Stonetrail at the far edge of

their territory. Spinpaws raced across the Stonetrail, their unnatural pelts gleaming in the fading sunlight. Snow coughed on the terrible scent.

Snow realized no more spinpaws were coming. She ran out onto the Stonetrail, feeling warm light on her fur. Looking up, she saw a spinpaw bearing down on her, its glowing eyes staring right at her. Snow ran even faster, and gasped with relief as she touched the grass on the other side.

Snow continued onwards, only stopping as she saw a tunnel out of the corner of her eye. Slowly, she crept forward. “Does any cat live here?” she called into the tunnel.

No cat responded. Maybe Snow could live here, away from the SunCats Pack. She stepped into the tunnel, and a voice whispered, “Welcome to the Tunnel of the Shining Stone.”

Chapter 2: Sun

SUN

Sun's nap was interrupted by the sound of rushing pawsteps. She opened her eyes to see Mouse, a brown and white tom, standing in front of her. "What is it, Mouse?" Sun asked, hiding her irritation.

"It's Snow," Mouse said.

Sun sighed. The white trainee had no skills at all, and showed no interest in becoming a soldier. What had Snow done now?

"She's gone," Mouse said.

"Gone?" Sun repeated.

"Yes," Mouse said. "I asked her to go on the sunset patrol with me and Tiger, and she said no and ran off."

"Maybe it's the best thing for us all," Sun meowed. "I mean, she was never happy here."

"No!" Mouse insisted stubbornly. "You must search for her!"

Sun sighed again. She knew Mouse wouldn't leave her alone until she agreed. "Fine," she hissed. "You may take Tiger and Mist."

"Thanks!" Mouse called as he raced out of the den.

Sun sighed and closed her eyes. But a loud greeting came from the entrance to her den and she looked up to see Grass, Snow's mother. "Snow is gone!" she cried worriedly.

"Snow would obviously be happier somewhere else. After

all, she never was interested in being a soldier!" Sun meowed, the last of her patience fading. "I'm tired of hearing about her!"

Grass whimpered. But Sun was angry. "That worthless cat never caught any prey. We won't have to feed a useless mouth tonight! Leave me alone, I want to sleep!" Sun hissed.

She curled up into a ball and watched as Grass ran from her den. Honestly, it was better that Snow was gone. Why was every cat so worried about her?

Sun closed her eyes and finally, she fell asleep.